

Today and Tomorrow... By Walter Lippmann

As Others See Us

IT IS FASHIONABLE in certain circles, I realize, to dismiss scornfully a serious concern about what foreign nations think of us.

This is a reaction to the naive and often silly American wish to be loved by everybody. But the reaction has gone much too far. For it is not true that in the real world of affairs a great power, even the strongest, can afford to ignore the opinions of others. It cannot overawe them all. It must have friends who trust it and believe in it and have confidence that its power will be used wisely.

I make no apology, therefore, for reporting that in Europe today there is a swelling tide of dissent and doubt and anxiety about the wisdom and competence with which United States foreign policy is being conducted. This statement is not based on a personal tourist's Gallup poll of taxi drivers and waiters. It is the result which anyone would get by going abroad and talking off the record and confidentially not only with the responsible officials, including Americans, but also with experienced reporters and editors. I do not think it can be denied that our foreign policy as now conducted does not have the confidence of our European allies.

THE OPINION IS wide and general that since the death of President Kennedy there has been some kind of radical change in the spirit of the United States government. This may not be true. But I heard it said almost everywhere. When I argued that this was to idealize Kennedy and to forget Kennedy's mistakes, that Kennedy and not Johnson had begun the increased United



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States involvement in Southeast Asia and that he too intervened in the Caribbean, the reply would be: "Yes, but the spirit of American foreign policy has changed dangerously since his death."

Comparing what I heard this spring with what I heard last November shortly after Mr. Johnson's election, it is plain to me that the loss of confidence of Europeans has been caused by actions taken by the President since his inauguration. The Europeans had, of course, been unanimous in

their fear of and opposition to Barry Goldwater, and they have been stupefied to see President Johnson, with the applause of the Goldwater Republicans, doing in Viet-Nam what Goldwater recommended and Johnson denounced during the campaign. They do not pause to ask whether President Johnson has acted with greater deliberation and finesse than Senator Goldwater would have done. What the Europeans did not expect was that the Goldwater recommendations about expanding the war, which were rejected overwhelmingly by the voters, would in such great measure be adopted by the victor.

THERE ARE AFLOAT many attempts to explain this happening. The fantastic explanations need not concern us. What does matter is that this sudden and dramatic reversal of policy has bred cynicism about the President's speeches and has struck at the basis of confidence in his Administration. The unfolding events since February have had a cumulative impact upon confidence abroad. Most particularly the cumulative effect has been caused by the Dominican intervention on top of the expanded Vietnamese war. It would not have been impossible to make a case that in

Viet-Nam the President had no alternative to sticking it out since Hanoi and Peking were rejecting negotiations. In fact, this view was fairly well accepted by our allies, even by the French, who now expect a long and indecisive land war. Nor would it have been wholly impossible to make a case that in the Dominican Republic the United States has a vital interest within its own sphere of influence. But what is almost impossible is to make a case for two interventions in two different continents at the same time.

WHEN I SAY that it would not have been impossible to make a case for the one or the other, I am compelled to say at once that I am talking only of the justification for the original and initial decision. For Europeans have been deeply shocked by the manner and the style in which these two operations, especially the Dominican, have been conducted. Even more deeply they have been shocked by the unlimited globalism and the rough unilateralism to which the President has resorted in explaining his decisions.

They see that in both ventures the President consulted none of his allies, even though he may have kept them informed fairly well about what he had decided to do. I am sure that I am not exaggerating when I say that the spectacle of the most powerful nation on earth using its great military power without consultation, without the consent or sanction of its allies, is regarded as ominous. When I argued that Lyndon Johnson is a progressive and a man of peace, the reply was that there is nothing more dangerous than unlimited power exercised personally

and unilaterally.

THERE IS, I regret to say, more to this dismal story. For there is a strong opinion that in the personal and unilateral exercise of unlimited power, the performance has been that of amateurs inexperienced in the use of power. Those Europeans who are wise in the ways of power politics are astonished to see an American government capable of believing that it could by bombing North Viet-Nam a little, but not too much, gain its political objectives in Indochina. Having themselves been through the experience of being bombed, they do not think it competent to adopt the strategy of wounding your enemy just enough to make him thoroughly angry.

And so, the side effect in Europe of the Administration's conduct of affairs since February has been to undermine confidence in the wisdom and competence of American leadership. The most farseeing of our friends abroad look upon our actions since February as a passing phase in American history. They believe that the American people are locked in a struggle between their old traditions and a new and recently acquired pride of power,—a pride of power which so often in the newly powerful becomes impregnated with the messianic illusion that single-handedly they can impose their kind of peace upon the rest of the world and expand their kind of freedom to all mankind.

This internal struggle in the American conscience is a fateful one. When I am feeling cheerful and full of hope, I tell myself that what has happened since February has been Lyndon Johnson's Bay of Pigs and that like his predecessor, he will learn wisdom from his failures.